

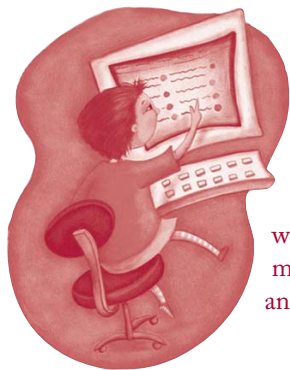


# YOUR Health

Los Angeles County Department of Health Services • Public Health

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## CYBER SAFETY FOR CHILDREN ONLINE: A PARENT'S GUIDE



The Internet has opened up a world of information to children, but it may also leave them vulnerable to "computer sex offenders" - individuals who attempt to sexually exploit (harm) children through the use of on-line services and the Internet.

Children can be directly victimized or harmed during a face-to-face meeting with a computer sex offender or they can be indirectly victimized through e-mail messages, on-line conversations in "chat rooms," and sexually explicit information and material.

***A computer sex offender can be of any age or gender and does not fit the stereotype of a criminal.***

**Continued on page 2**

## INFLUENZA CAN BE DEADLY: FACTS AND TIPS TO HELP YOU PREPARE FOR FLU SEASON

Influenza is a viral infection spread when an infected person sneezes or coughs and contaminates things that other people touch. Other people catch the virus by breathing in airborne droplets containing the flu virus, or by touching contaminated things, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. Influenza and pneumonia together remain one of the top ten causes of death in the United States. Each year 10% to 20% of people in the United States get the flu.

### **Not all flu is influenza**

While the word "flu" is commonly used to mean any respiratory or even intestinal infection ("stomach flu"), the influenza virus is the most dangerous of the hundreds of respiratory viruses around.

Influenza infections occur every winter, generally from November through March. You might be suffering from the flu if you have a sudden onset of fever with sore throat, runny nose, cough, muscle aches and extreme tiredness. Symptoms begin one to three days after exposure to the virus and usually last for a week. Some people are more susceptible than others to develop complications of flu such as pneumonia, bronchitis, flare-ups of chronic diseases like asthma and congestive heart failure, and even death. The people at high risk for complications are persons 65 years of age or older, infants, and people who have certain medical conditions.

### **If you think you have the flu:**

Get bed rest. Drink a lot of fluids and eat plenty of fruits to get extra vitamin C. If you have other high-risk medical conditions, there are antiviral medications that can be prescribed that may reduce your

illness; contact your doctor for treatment. Even after you recover, eat a lot of citrus fruits such as oranges and grapefruit and high protein foods such as egg whites, soymilk, beans and

nuts for at least two weeks. Take acetaminophen or ibuprofen for headache and muscles aches. Never give aspirin or any combination medication that contains aspirin or salicylic acid to a child or a teenager suffering from flu since it can sometimes cause a deadly disease called Reye's Syndrome.



### **Prevention:**

- Get vaccinated: Receiving a flu vaccine is the best way to prevent the flu. If a vaccinated person gets an infection, the symptoms are milder and complications are less likely. For more information on vaccinations, see this month's "Ask the Public Health Nurse."
- Wash your hands, especially after touching materials handled by patients with the flu.
- Avoid crowds when possible.
- Avoid hospitals, nursing homes or other social places if you have the flu to protect others from getting infected.
- Cover your mouth when you sneeze or cough and properly dispose of used tissues.

# Cyber Safety: Continued from page 1

## Signs that your Child Might be At Risk On-line

- Your child spends large amounts of time on-line, especially at night.
- You find pornography on your child's computer.
- Your child receives phone calls from people you don't know or is making calls, sometimes long distance, to numbers you don't recognize.
- Your child receives mail, gifts, or packages from someone you don't know.
- Your child turns the computer monitor off or quickly changes the screen on the monitor when you come into the room.
- Your child becomes withdrawn from the family.
- Your child is using an on-line account belonging to someone else.

## What Should You Do If You Suspect Your Child is Communicating With A Computer Sex Offender?

- Talk openly with your child about your suspicions.
- Review what is on your child's computer. Ask if you don't know.
- Use a Call ID service to identify who is calling your child.
- Monitor your child's access to all types of live electronic communications (i.e., chat rooms, instant messages, Internet Relay Chat, etc).

## Contact your local or state law enforcement agency if any of the following situations occur:

- Your child or anyone in the household has received child pornography.
- Your child has been sexually solicited by someone who knows that your child is under 18 years of age.
- Your child has received sexually explicit images from someone who knows your child is under the age of 18.

## What Can You Do To Lower The Chances of a Computer Sex Offender Harming Your Child?

- Talk to your child about potential dangers on-line.
- Spend time with your children on-line. Have them teach you about their favorite web sites.
- Keep the computer in a common room in the house, not in your child's bedroom.
- Use parental controls provided by your Internet service provider and/or software that can block access to web sites that contain offensive material.
- Find out what computer safeguards are used by your child's school, the public library, and at the homes of your child's friends.
- Understand, even if your child was a willing participant in any form of sexual exploitation, that your child is not at fault; he or she is the victim.

**Key Word:** The Internet is a global network that connects computers via telephone lines and/or fiber networks to warehouses of electronic information. With only a computer, a modem, a telephone line and a service provider, people from all over the world can communicate and share information.



## Teach your children to:

- Never arrange a face-to-face meeting with someone they met on-line.
- Never post (upload) pictures of themselves on the Internet or send e-mail to individuals they do not personally know.
- Never give out identifying information such as their name, home address, school name, or telephone number.
- Never respond to messages or bulletin board postings that are suggestive, obscene, belligerent or harrasing.

*For more information, see A Parent's Guide to Internet Safety, U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation available at <http://www.fbi.gov/publications/pguide/pguidee.htm> .*

**For more information or to report child abuse on the Internet, please contact Sandra Guine, Los Angeles County Child Abuse Prevention Program at (213) 639-6443, or your local law enforcement agencies.**



# Hidden Dangers: Poisons in the Home

Five million poison exposures are reported to Poison Control Centers every year in the United States, and 90 percent of those occur in the home. This includes poisons that are swallowed and toxic substances that have come into contact with the skin or eyes.

Cleaning products, medications, cosmetics and personal care products, pesticides, vitamins, arts and crafts supplies, chemicals, and alcohol are some of the most common poisons found in a home.

Poisoning prevention begins with common sense. Here are some tips for poison prevention in your home:

**Keep all potential poisons in their original containers with their original labels intact.** Read and carefully follow the label instructions on every potentially poisonous product (for example, some products require that you wear protective clothing or eye protection when using them).

**Store household products or toxic substances far away from food, and never store potential poisons in used food containers.** Storing turpentine in an old apple juice jug, for example, is an invitation for disaster.

**Discard outdated products you don't anticipate using again.** Toxic substances should not be discarded with your regular household garbage. Instead, contact the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works Environmental Information Hotline at 888-CLEANLA for information on the disposal of hazardous waste.

**Store potential poisons out of sight and out of reach of children, including visitors.** Children have the greatest risk for accidental poisoning, because they are naturally curious and will put much of what they can reach into their mouths. Household detergent and other cleaning products should be stored in cabinets above the level of the kitchen counter top, not under the sink. To protect older children who may be able to reach these higher storage locations, all cabinets containing poisons should be secured with a lock or safety latch.

**The phone number for Poison Control in California is 800-876-4766.**

**Medications should always be stored in child-resistant containers, which are much more difficult for small children to open.** Medications pose a special hazard for children. Doses considered routine in adults may be life-threatening in children. Be aware, however, that "child-resistant" does not mean childproof, so all medications should be kept in locked cabinets. (Most bathroom medicine cabinets are easily accessible, even to young children.)

Use the same precautions with nonprescription drugs. Some over-the-counter products—*aspirin*, for example—can be lethal in children if large amounts are consumed. Even nutritional supplements can be toxic. Every year, several children die as the result of iron poisoning after consuming large amounts of vitamins left within their reach.

**If you have young children in your home, ask your guests not to leave their medications on counters or in purses or bags that children can reach.** More than 30 percent of all accidental drug poisonings in children involve medications belonging to someone other than the child's immediate family. Better yet, ask them if you can store them in a safe place while they are visiting.

When visiting other people's homes with your young children, don't let them roam around until you have checked the surroundings and are sure they are safe. Grandparent's homes are no exception. Because of their age, they are more likely to take medications and less likely to use child-resistant containers, which may be difficult for them to open.

**If a poisoning occurs, here are the steps to follow:**

Call 9-1-1 immediately if the victim is unconscious, having seizures, or experiencing difficulty breathing. Otherwise, contact the Poison Control Center immediately (they are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week) at **800-876-4766**.

*When you reach Poison Control, be prepared to answer the following questions:*

- What is the condition of the individual who was exposed?
- When did the exposure occur?
- What is their age and how much do they weigh?
- What is the name of the medication and approximately how much was ingested?



**Five million poison exposures are reported to Poison Control Centers every year in the United States, and 90 percent of those occur in the home.**

**DO NOT GIVE ANYTHING BY MOUTH** unless you are instructed to do so. The Poison Control Center can provide you with immediate recommendations for treatment.

**Gases or Fumes:** When poisonous gases or fumes are the source of the problem, quickly remove the person from the contaminated area and into fresh air as soon as possible. If the gas or fumes present an immediate threat to you, do not attempt to rescue the individual; call 9-1-1.

**Skin Contact:** If a poison comes in contact with the skin, remove any contaminated clothing and then rinse the skin with water continuously for 15 minutes. If the eye is involved, rinse the eye with lukewarm water immediately and continue for 15 minutes. Rather than forcing the eye open to rinse it, encourage the person to blink as much as possible.

**Ingestion:** If a poison is ingested, do not try to make the person throw up unless instructed to do so by the Poison Control Center. In some cases, vomiting will actually cause additional damage.

**Household Products or Chemicals:** If the poison exposure involves a household product or chemical, you should first administer the emergency first aid described above and then call Poison Control. If more than one adult is available to help, one should call Poison Control while the other provides first aid.



# Ask the Public Health Nurse

**Question:** *Do adults need immunizations?*

**Answer:** Yes. Immunizations, also called vaccinations, protect you from diseases. Some immunizations are given only once, while others require several treatments over time, and others are required every year.

The specific immunizations an adult requires vary depending on age, overall health, past immunizations, and other factors. Adults need to repeat some immunizations in order to maintain their immunity to diseases such as tetanus and diphtheria; boosters should be given every 10 years for continuous protection.

Flu shots are a common type of immunization. An annual flu shot is effective at preventing infection. Because the virus changes every year, having a flu shot one year will not prevent you from getting the flu the next year. Studies have found that the flu shot reduces the number of people who need to be hospitalized or who die from pneumonia. Secondary upper respiratory infections, missed days at work, and visits to a doctor for respiratory infections can be reduced as well. Even if a flu shot does not prevent the flu in some older adults, the vaccine can reduce the severity of flu symptoms and decrease the risk of complications.

You cannot prevent or treat the flu by taking antibiotics. Antibiotics will not treat viral infections, such as the flu, or prevent complications. If a bacterial infection develops, antibiotics may be helpful. Large doses of vitamin C, zinc, or other vitamins and minerals will not prevent or treat the flu.

## CDC recommends flu vaccination for:

- Persons aged above 50 years.
- People with certain chronic diseases including diabetes, kidney problems, impaired immune systems, or heart or lung problems, including asthma.
- Residents of nursing home and other long term care facilities.
- Women who will be in their second or third trimester of pregnancy during flu season.
- Children and adolescents (aged 6 months–18 years) who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy.
- Health care workers and caregivers of people at high risk.

In addition, people more than 65 years of age or those with a serious chronic condition who have not taken Pneumococcal vaccine in the past 10 years should ask their doctor for this vaccine to prevent Pneumococcal pneumonia, a frequent complication of influenza infection.

## Who should NOT get the flu shots?

- Persons who have had a severe allergic reaction to a previous flu vaccination.
- Persons who have severe allergic reactions to eggs.
- Children less than 6 months of age. (Instead, parents and other household members can be vaccinated.)
- Persons with a current illness accompanied by a fever should wait until the fever is gone.

**The County offers free flu vaccinations for people at risk (listed above) at several community sites. For more information on these clinics, call the County's Infoline at 1-800-427-8700.**

## Are you eligible for food stamps online?

Low-income families and individuals can use food stamps to buy nutritious food. A new on-line tool allows you to find out if you may be eligible for food stamps before you head to your local Food Stamp Office. Visit the U. S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service website at [www.foodstamps-step1.usda.gov](http://www.foodstamps-step1.usda.gov).

Please note: After visiting the web site, you must then visit your local Food Stamp Office to file an application.

**For more information, please call 1-800-952-5253**

## Influenza Myths and Facts:

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/flu/facts.htm>

**Myth #1: Influenza is merely a nuisance.** Wrong. Influenza is a major cause of illness and death in the United States and leads to an average of about 36,000 deaths and 114,000 hospitalizations per year.

**Myth #2: Flu shots cause the flu.** Wrong. The licensed injectable flu vaccine used in the United States, which is made from inactivated or killed flu viruses, cannot cause the flu and does not cause flu illness.

**Myth #3: Flu vaccine doesn't work.** Not exactly. When the viruses in the vaccine and circulating viruses are similar, the flu shot is very effective. There are several reasons why people think influenza vaccine doesn't work. People who have gotten a flu vaccination may then get sick from a different virus that causes respiratory illness but is mistaken for flu; the flu shot only prevents illness caused by the influenza virus. In addition, protection from the vaccine is not 100%. Studies of healthy young adults have shown flu vaccine to be 70% to 90% effective in preventing the flu. In the elderly and those with certain long-term medical conditions, the flu shot is often less effective in preventing illness. However, in the elderly, flu vaccine is very effective in reducing hospitalizations and death from flu-related causes.

**Myth #4: There is no need to get a flu vaccine every year.** Wrong. The flu viruses are constantly changing. Generally, new influenza virus strains circulate every flu season, so the vaccine is changed each year.



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